

# Homeward-Bound

by Newman Hall

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's presence in our lives, trusting in His guidance, and being diligent in our spiritual journey.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:30, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 26:41, John 14:1, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 12:1

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Guidance"

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## Description

Newman Hall preaches about the journey of life as a voyage across the sea, using the analogy of a ship navigating through storms and trials to reach its desired haven. He emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's guidance and seeking His help through prayer, Scripture, and self-examination. Hall highlights the need for diligence, perseverance, and love in steering our souls towards heaven, despite the challenges and temptations we face. He encourages believers to stay focused on God as their compass, allowing His love to guide them steadily towards their eternal home. Ultimately, Hall assures that through faith, God will lead His people safely to their desired haven, where they will find rest, peace, and eternal joy.

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## Transcript

By Newman Hall, at Surrey Chapel, England, on his return from America in 1867.

"Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven." Psalm 107:30

A short time ago I was spending Sunday in the midst of the Atlantic. A strong wind was blowing, and the sea was high. In consequence of the rolling of the vessel it was with some difficulty that divine service was conducted. The congregation, composed of the captain and the small number of passengers who were able to leave their berths, were at one moment above me, at the next below; and winds and water combined their roar as I spoke from the words, "The ship was in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves." Within a few days we entered the calm cove of Cork, and there was a happy fulfillment of my text, "Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He brings them to their desired haven." When, a few hours after, I crossed the Irish Channel, and once more set my foot on my dear old native land; and when I was permitted to meet again those dearer to me than my own life; and home, with all its charms of love, often thought of with yearning desire, welcomed me back after so long an absence, and all the dear familiar forms and accents greeted me--then again I felt, and with what thankfulness! the fulfillment of the text, "So He brings them to their desired haven."

And now this day, how my heart swells at another illustration of it! What a home to my soul is this scene of many years of happy labor! I have preached in many magnificent churches, some of them built of spotless marble, with swelling dome and lofty spire, and adorned with the lavish generosity which merchant princes in America are as able as willing to manifest towards the house of the Lord; but my heart has ever turned with a love unfaltering to these rustic walls, consecrated by so many hallowed associations.

Dear old Surrey Chapel! And if the place is dear, still more the people--the loving flock who have followed me everywhere with their prayers, and have asked not merely protection and a safe return, but a blessing on my work in that distant land; and who are here this day with thankful hearts to join in a common tribute of praise to Him who permits us thus again to meet. And so, after much journeying, and many labors, and the excitement of fresh scenes and fresh people from day to day--now, returning to this familiar place and these familiar faces, I feel how applicable to my case are the words of the text, "Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them to their desired haven."

In a world full of God, how apt we are to forget Him! Living a life each moment of which is sustained by Him, how little we recognize His guardian care! Accomplishing in safety a long ocean voyage, we speak of the soundness of the ship, the completeness of the machinery, the efficiency of the crew, the skill of the captain, and we often lose sight of Him who gave the skill by which the ship was built and is propelled over the stormy, trackless deep. We are "glad because we are quiet," but we often forget that it is He who "brings us to our desired haven." He rules the waves. He holds the winds in His fists. He rides upon the clouds. He directs the storm. He controls those forces of Nature by which in a moment we might be overwhelmed. We could never reach the haven unaided by God. "Without Him we can do nothing."

If this is so in things temporal, we need not wonder it is so in things spiritual. How can the soul safely traverse the ocean of its probationary being? How, amid the winds and waves, the rocks and quicksands of temptation and sin, can our poor, frail, shattered bark reach the harbor of salvation? This is impossible without Him. "By grace we are saved." We are already lost. We are shipwrecked by sin. We are ready to sink. But "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Jesus came to save the lost. By the sacrifice of Himself He provided deliverance for all. By Him we receive the pardon of our sins, deliverance from condemnation, and restoration to the favor of God and the hope of heaven.

Further to help us, God gives us His Holy Spirit, by whom the heart is changed, so that we repent of sin, trusting in the Savior. He helps us from day to day, teaching, guiding, purifying, comforting us. He inspires us with love to Jesus, so that we desire to imitate and to serve Him in all things. We are very weak, but He gives us strength; very ignorant, but He makes us wise; very prone to wander, but He restrains us; constantly liable to sink in the midst of the sea, but He upholds us. "By the grace of God I am what I am." His strength is made perfect in weakness. His love is free, unchangeable, inexhaustible, and "so He brings us to our desired haven." But as with a voyage at sea, so with the soul: man's efforts must be conjoined with those of God, or, as we may rather say, God's working is manifested in connection with our own. "He works in us," not to supersede our own activities, but that we may "will and do."

Our ship was impelled by STEAM. Eighty tons of coal were consumed daily in the great furnaces, which ten men were always feeding. When these grew weary, others took their places. If they had relaxed their efforts for only a few minutes, the speed of the ship would have diminished. And there is a fire of love within the soul, which is its motive power. This has been kindled by God Himself, and by Him is continually kept alive. Yet we ourselves must labor to supply it with fuel. By the truth of God, by meditation on His love, by the constant exercise of godliness, by diligence in the use of all the means of grace, we must

keep this fire burning. The furnaces of a steam vessel are constantly fanned by currents of air supplied from above; and so we must fan this inward fire of religion by the breath of prayer. "Pray without ceasing." The fuel will only stifle the furnace if there is no draught. And the means of grace and Christian doctrine will be of no service to us unless by earnest prayer the flame of love fastens upon them and vitalizes them. There may be much theology and no godliness. Only when knowledge ascends to Him does it augment the motive force of the soul.

Our ship was also impelled by the WIND. When this was favorable, the sails were at once set to catch it. Vigilantly was it watched, and no opportunity was missed of thus accelerating our speed. If the canvas had only just been taken in, yet, should the wind again become even in a slight degree favorable, that canvas was at once unfurled again. What a lesson was taught us of Christian diligence! God is always sending favorable breezes for the soul. They change their force and their direction, requiring new and appropriate efforts on our part; but there is no season when we may not carry sail. Alas, how negligent we often are! How much of God's gracious help we lose by inattention and sloth! We feel the breeze, we are conscious it is favorable, it seems to give the word to loose the sails; but we linger, we postpone, we are not brisk and active, we spread only some sails when we might spread all. O, let us "give all diligence!" And as God does "breathe the auspicious gale," let us "spread our sail and speed our way." There must be this "working together," for "so He brings them to their desired haven."

A ship needs a RUDDER. Without this it tosses helplessly on the waves, the sport of every wind and every current. Day after day it may be driven backwards and forwards, making no progress, doomed to sink. How different the vessel whose rudder promptly replies to the steersman's steady hand! With what a meaning does it now drive onward, in opposition to the tide, cutting through the waves, its prow ever turned to the desired haven which it is ever nearing!

And the soul without an object, and that object God, is but a rudderless ship. How the worldling is driven here and there, the sport of circumstances! Ever seeking to satisfy a nature made for God with that which is finite, and cannot fill the void, he is tossed about by every wind of opinion, impulse, and passion. He may be a man of great mental power, but his genius only leads him round in a larger circle than others move in. He does not make progress. A steamship without a rudder would go in a circle. One ship might be larger than another, and be propelled with greater power, but it would still go round, though on a wider circumference. So it is with those who do not make God and heaven the great object of their life. One person may be stupid and ignorant; another may have a brilliant genius and a mind stored with universal learning; but if both are living without God, both, though with a different sweep, go round, and round, and round the same dull, narrow center--self. O, let us resolve that God, not self, shall be the object we live for. To do His will, to enjoy His favor, to promote His glory, to share in His reward--let this be the purpose of our life. Then our vessel, no longer borne here and there by varying tides, no longer circling round itself, making no progress, will cleave the billows of passion, and stem the currents of worldliness, and hold on its course. This also is by the help of God, and "so He brings them to their desired haven."

In steering the vessel a CHART is needed. Here the coast-line is accurately marked, together with every rock and every shoal by which the ship may be imperilled. This chart the navigator constantly examines, tracing on it the course of his ship, so that he may avoid the dangers it indicates, and by the best track reach his desired haven. To neglect the chart would be to miss that haven and to wreck the ship. God has given us a chart in His holy Word. Here are marked out the way to heaven, and the dangers that beset it. But in order to obtain the benefit God designed in giving us this chart, it is necessary that we consult it. It should be our daily companion, the subject of our habitual meditation.

If a captain did not look at his chart for several days, when in the neighborhood of headlands and rocks, would not his ship be in great peril? Who would like to insure it, or to sail in it? Alas, there are many who allow a whole week to go without any serious, earnest study their heavenly chart!

Brethren, let us read it, not only in our churches once a week, but daily in our families and in our closets. Let us watch against the dangers it points out; let us steer along the course it indicates. We can only hope to get safely into port by following its directions. God has given us this chart that we may consult it, and "so He brings us to our desired haven."

On the ship I noticed how the officer of the watch and the men at the fore-castle kept a good LOOKOUT. Wistfully by day and night they gazed forward to discover any vessel in their path with which they might come in collision; and when we were approaching land, with what eagerness did they scan the horizon for the first indication of the shore, or for the first glimmer of the signal light! So let us "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." Let us "take heed to ourselves." We may be sailing fast, but let us not on that account give way to a recklessness of danger which is ever perilous. Many a ship has thus struck and gone down when in full career. We need to be ever on our guard against concealed as well as obvious dangers, against unsuspected as well as easily besetting and familiar temptations. God helps us to keep watch, and "so He brings us to our desired haven."

But the navigator does more than look on the surface of the sea; he sounds its DEPTHS. When he thinks he may be approaching land, though by reason of fog or darkness he cannot see it, he casts the lead, and learns both the depth of the water and the nature of the bottom. Thus he ascertains where he is. So let us search into our own hearts. When the outward temptation may not be visible, let us examine whether we may not be approaching it. We may judge of this by our inward thoughts and desires. How often these, becoming worldly and sensual, will indicate, like the sand adhering to the sounding lead, that we are approaching dangerous shoals. How often, by such scrutiny into the depths of our nature, we may be warned in time to put the ship about, and so escape!

The navigator also takes pains day by day to ascertain how FAST he is going, and in what DIRECTION. Every two hours he counts the knots the ship is running. When opportunity occurs he takes observations by the sun and other heavenly bodies, by which to verify and correct his calculations. Neglect or error here would be dangerous. Only by the use of such means can he find his way across the pathless ocean and reach the desired haven. And just so it must be with the soul: We should "examine ourselves whether we be in the faith"--in the true course towards heaven. We should ask what progress we are making--whether we are indeed leaving "the things which are behind, and reaching forth to the things which are before." We should always verify our own experience by divine truth, as the seaman verifies his mundane calculations by looking at the heavenly bodies. Let us take heed that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit--that the divine word and our own feelings agree--that our hearts are in harmony with Heaven. It is a great thing to steer a ship from one continent to another. It is a much greater thing to make a prosperous voyage through time to eternity. If vigilance and painstaking are needed in the lesser journey, surely they cannot be dispensed with in the greater. In such painstaking God will help us, and "so He brings us to our desired haven."

Essential to navigation is the COMPASS. The needle touched by the loadstone ever points northward. What ever may be the direction of the ship, however its course may be changed--from north to south, from east to west--still the needle ever turns to its pole. A sudden gust, a mighty wave, may turn the ship from its course; but no stormy blast can alter the direction of that needle, which in the night as well as the day, in the tempest as well as in the calm, still points true to its home, and shows the pilot how to steer. So let

our hearts be a compass-needle--touched with divine love, and ever pointing to its source.

There is no guidance like that of love. Quicker than calculation--surer than theory--steady amid tempest--permanent in change--love points homeward amid the darkness and the storm. Wild winds may whirl us round and round, but the heart still trembles towards its home. Strong currents may for a time divert us from our course, but a true heart within ever tells of that divergence, and gives no peace until we return. O for a heart true to God! O, to have our compass preserved from counter-acting and deflecting influences! Let us beware of carrying with us what would overpower this holy magnetism. Let us cast out of the ship the treasure we value most, if it turns aside that needle! Nothing can be really a treasure which leads the heart away from God. O Source of Love, touch our hearts anew from day to day--magnetize them with Yourself, and make them true to You--help us to steer our ship by the constancy of love--love imparted and sustained by Yourself. So bring us to our desired haven.

Illustrative of our theme, the SEA-BIRDS which followed our vessel taught an important lesson. I watched their beautiful motions--now gently floating on the wind with no apparent exertion, now flapping their wings in upward flight, now descending to catch from the crest of a wave the food thrown from the ship, now outstripping the wind to recover the distance lost, now wheeling with graceful curve to the right and left, and ever crossing and recrossing each other as if in harmonious and joyful dance. Watching them, one forgot that they had any other motion. Yet all the while they were traveling onwards with the ship at the rate of fourteen knots an hour. Those motions among themselves did not for a moment suspend their steady progressive flight across the deep, nor did that progressive flight with the ship prevent those lesser activities of their own.

True type of the Christian. There are objects of the present life which we should seek, pleasures which we should enjoy, and duties to ourselves and one another which we should discharge. True religion does not require us to abnegate any part of our nature, nor does the pursuit of the future demand the neglect of the present. The flight of a bird straight across the ocean in one unvarying line would not have been so beautiful, would not have displayed so much activity or required so much strength, as the varied motions of those seagulls. The life of the monk or nun who retires from the secular duties of the present life is not so beautiful, is not so Christian, does not require so much grace, does not indicate so high a degree of piety, as that of the man or woman, diligent in the duties of the state, of the exchange, of the workshop, of the family--with cares of business, cares of children, claims of neighborhood and friends--who yet, amid all, is making steady progress heavenward; now stooping for food, now soaring in thankfulness, now sweeping here and there in the exercise of God-given faculties, and ever with friendly heart mingling in beautiful harmony with the kindred flight of others--yet in every one of these motions regulated by the concurrent and all-controlling flight onwards, ever onwards, to the desired haven.

Some there are whose lives resemble the flight of birds around a ship at anchor. They go up and down, and round and round, yet their locality is unchanged. Their lives may be active and beautiful, but they make no progress heavenward. They are no nearer port. The Christian abstains from all that is sinful and vain in this world; but in diligent exercise of his varied faculties, the performance of earthly duties, and the enjoyment of social and domestic delights, he resembles others. But here is the difference--he is all the while speeding his flight onward towards God, while they are ever circling round themselves. O for grace to be thus "in the world and not of the world"--to be performing diligently and cheerfully our part in the present life, yet ever pressing towards our eternal rest. God will give us the needful grace; and, "so He brings us to our desired haven."

Another lesson I was taught in that homeward voyage. During several days the wind was high, the sea was rough, and the big waves tossed our vessel to and fro, often breaking over its deck, and covering it with foam. Many of the passengers were sick, and some trembled with fear; yet the wind, being in our favor, added to our speed, and brought us more quickly to our desired haven. And thus our God brings His people home to glory. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom."

The Atlantic is noted for its storms, as is the Pacific for its tranquillity. Seldom is the voyage made upon a waveless sea. If some days are peaceful, others are stormy, and frequently the whole passage is amid tempestuous waves. Thus it is with Christians. Very few find the ocean smooth. The majority encounter tempests during some part of the voyage; and to some it is stormy, O, how stormy! all the time. The winds roar, the billows break over the ship, which rolls and pitches, and sometimes seems about to sink. But the storms which assail the Christian are always helps, not hindrances. The winds may be boisterous, but they are never contrary. The hurricane which tosses the ship speeds her passage, and helps her towards the desired haven. "All things work together for good to those who love God."

Sometimes we can see that the storm drives us homeward. But at other times it seems, to our imperfect vision, only to keep us back, or drive us from our course. We cannot always explain the mystery of trial to others, nor understand it ourselves. Winds, and waves, and currents seem against us; and yet we may be sure that, directed by a Father's wisdom and love, they are promoting our salvation. These light afflictions "work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And so, by needed discipline--so, by the rough winds and waves of trial--"so He brings them to their desired haven."

O our Father! spare us, for we are weak and timid! but rather than the treacherous calm which might keep us away from You, send us the stormy wind, and we will still trust You and praise You. Send what weather You will, only bring us safely, swiftly onward to our desired haven.

There were some on board who were sickly, and some, who were in fear; yet they reached the harbor as surely and as soon as those whose comfort had been uninterrupted. And thus it is with our voyage heavenward. Many are harassed with fears: they are dismayed by the raging waves; they are sick with sorrow; they are disquieted with terror; they often have little hope of reaching home--yet, being in the vessel with Christ, and trusting in Him alone, they are as safe as the happiest of their fellow-voyagers.

There are many who desire the haven, but not the voyage; they long for home, but dread the ocean passage. Even so there are many Christians who shrink from that portion of the sea which is nearest their eternal rest--that narrow sea called death--by whom the haven is nevertheless "desired." Yonder is their treasure, yonder their home, and there have they sent forward their hearts. Cheer up, timid saint; soon that narrow sea will be passed, and you will be "glad because you are quiet."

Yes, we shall be quiet there! No evil memories haunt the blessed ones who have entered that port of peace; no accusing conscience disturbs their joy. They bask in the sunshine of love, they rest in the bosom of their Father, and they are "glad because they are quiet." Fears no longer, like stormy gusts, toss them about, nor can despondency and doubt gather round them a mist darker and more dismal than the night. At length they enjoy the full fruition of all their hopes, and they are "glad because they be quiet."

Temptation no longer, like a strong contrary tide, threatens to carry them away; they have no longer to keep anxious watch lest suddenly they strike on rock or quicksand; all perils past, they are "glad because they be quiet." From all sorrow and sickness, from all anxiety and care, from all neglect and unkindness, from all malice and enmity, from all uncertainty and change, from all bereavement and separation, they

are now secure, and so they are "glad because they are quiet." After their long, and stormy, and perilous, and anxious voyage, they have entered the harbor, and cast anchor, and are safely moored, to go no more out forever.

"Rest comes at length, though life be dark and dreary;

The day must dawn, and darksome night be past;

All journeys end in welcomes to the weary,

And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last."

And then will all the praise be ascribed through eternal ages to Him who, amid many storms and countless perils, safely brought the ship to that long-desired haven. To Him shall be ascribed all the glory of our salvation. Hallelujah! "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever." This shall be the utterance of the joy of those who are "glad because they are quiet," and of their gratitude to Him who "so brings them to their desired haven."

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